

September 25, 2008

Mayor and Council
Rockville City Hall
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mayor and Council:

On behalf of the Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan Advisory Group (TNPAG), I am submitting this testimony in support of the draft Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan as submitted by our Group.

- Both the City and the TNPAG members worked together over the years to ensure that the entire Twinbrook community was part of the process of developing the Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan.
- Our outreach effort, which is well documented, was one of the most extensive and expensive efforts of its kind ever undertaken by the City of Rockville. We ensured that the full range of ethnic, age, and income groups in our diverse community were encouraged to participate in this process. The involvement of this diverse group of people is reflected in this Plan.
- The development of the Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan was an inclusive and transparent process. Many of Twinbrook's newer residents have had their first experience being engaged in a local issue as a result of outreach efforts associated with this Plan. We hope our efforts will broaden community activism in Twinbrook from its current narrow base.
- The planning experts at the Maryland Department of Planning declared: "Your plan provides an excellent blueprint for the actions and programs needed to address the growth and redevelopment related issues confronting this portion of Rockville. The possible use of flexible development tools such as the floating zones and form-based zoning would enable you to create a development scheme that best meets the unique needs of this neighborhood. Congratulations on an excellent planning effort."
- The community's reaction to the draft Plan was even more gratifying. The Twinbrook community embraced the plan's focus on retaining single-family homes, improving public facilities and creating a better, more people-friendly environment.
- After many years of citizen concern, the Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan represents the only real concrete action taken to address Twinbrook's current and future planning needs.
- From the feedback we have received from those few residents who do not like a part of the Plan, we can find no agreement among them on an alternative to the Plan we have presented.
- The Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan, which has the support of the community and the Maryland Department of Planning and the City's Planning Commission should now be approved and supported by the Mayor and Council.

Respectfully yours,

Joe McClane
Chair, Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan Advisory Group

"Andy Harper" <andyharper@comcast.net> 09/27/2008 08:26 AM
To <twinbrookplan@rockvillemd.gov>
cc
Subject Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan

Dear Sirs,

I lived 1 block behind the Twinbrook Shopping Center on Ardennes Ave from 1950-1962. From 1962-1970 I lived below Peary HS next to Rock Creek. Hiking through the woods and across the creek to Twinbrook Shopping Center was a weekly occurrence. In the early 1970's I lived on Monroe St in Rockville, on Clagett Drive in Twinbrook and on Aspen Hill RD near the old Aspen Hill Elementary School. Since 1976, My wife, who by the way, grew up on Vandegrift Ave in Twinbrook, and myself have lived in a small home in Urbana Md, up 270 a ways.

I have worked in the City of Rockville my adult life, for a federal agency. I am still there, enjoying Rockville at age 59.

Even though I have not actually lived in Rockville since '76, my hometown is Rockville and it's immediate environs. Twinbrook is one of my favorite places, even if all the stores are different than when I was young. Essentially it is the same vibrant, alive shopping center I remember so well from my younger days. I really like the chicken and rice & beans at El Pollo, and the Twinbrook Deli still sees me regularly, 50 years after I first used to go there to get my baseball cards, french fries and soda pop.

My 83 yr old mother-in-law still lives there. I work in Rockville daily. I attended Twinbrook Elementary, Broome Jr High, Peary HS and Montgomery College. In fact, I was a plankowner at Twinbrook Elementary, starting Kindergarten there when it first opened. I went there through 6th grade. In fact, my 6th grade teacher was Mrs. Gladys Boston, who we were told was the 1st black teacher in a white school in Montgomery county. A fact I am proud to say I was part of.

I was 12 yrs old in 1962, so I grew up with Twinbrook. One of my earliest memories is seeing all the activity as the A & P was built. My friend Jeff Huber and I had walked up there from our homes on Ardennes near Lemay. We stood watching the construction, all the big trucks and dirt piles and everything as Twinbrook Shopping Center was being built. I was about 4 years old. A construction worker saw us and asked what we were doing there. Remember, we were 2 little 4 yr old kids. He put us in his truck and drove us to my house 2 blocks away and then proceed to chew my mom out for letting 2 little kids walk around alone up there. Whew.

I ran in the 1st Rockville Twilight 8K back in the 1980's, climbed the old viaduct over the tracks on Viers Mill rd in the late '50's, attended the Episcopal church in the center of Rockville, built forts & played in the old sawdust pit in Twinbrook where Halpine Rd crossed the tracks. I currently go to the Fitness First gym in Wintergreen Plaza, I take walks around Rockville many days each week, winding through all the streets from Nelson to Jefferson St. I used to love going to the old Rockville Library which was in the big old house on Jefferson St back in the 1950's. I bought my baseball cards and comic books at the old Twinbrook Deli (you know, the one Ollie had before he & his brother split into 2 deli's) and the Drug Fair (currently CVS), & at the Peoples Drug Store across

Viers Mill Rd. My wife and I used to go to Gentleman Jim's for Pizza while we were dating, as I also did later in the 1970's with my softball team. I used to bowl under the shopping center. It was under the old Murphy's 5 & 10 cent dept store. McIntires Hardware and the old Wire's Hardware stores were my 1st introduction to home improvement. Highs was a great place for an ice cream cone.

I guess the only place I never entered was the old Twinbrook Tap Room Bar, until many years later, when, as a young adult out of the army, a friend and I went in and had a beer and an excellent hamburger. So, in the end, I did patronize every business in Twinbrook at some point. Oh yeah, Remember the bakery. Wow! Those hot donuts were great!

In 1967, I graduated from Peary and worked that summer driving a Henry's ice cream truck through Twinbrook and Aspen Hill during the days. I also worked at night as a 'curber' (delivering your order to your car where you had placed your order at the speakers!) at the old Hot Shoppes Restaurant over in Congressional Plaza. One fine September morning I was in my ice cream truck, and around 11am, after not selling even 1 popsicle, I drove the truck into Rockville, pulled up half on the rd and half on the dirt/gravel area right in front of the old Rockville post office. I went inside and joined the US Army. Gave my mom a heart attack almost. I was the oldest of 7 kids of which 5 were boys and Vietnam was really heating up. She was sure I was dead meat.

I used to take my dates to either the Rockville Drive-in (which, incidentally, I really miss!) or the Roller skating Rink down in the old hanger at Congressional. Speaking of hangers, one of my early memories is of sitting on the side of Rockville Pike watching the planes take off and land at the Congressional airport. I wonder how many of you even knew that there was an airfield where Congressional Plaza now stands? My buddy Tim & I would clean golf balls out of the water traps at Congressional golf club on the Pike. While living in Twinbrook, the Twinbrook Rec Center was a great place to play. You could still catch snakes in the creek there. Played tether ball and did crafts during the summer. Twinbrook Pkwy was not there, of course. Just Halpine road, a winding dirt road from Viers Mill Rd over to Rockville Pike. We were not allowed to go over to that road. There was some old guy who had a little shack on Halpine rd. As far as I know, it was the only dwelling on the road. The local kids legend was that he grabbed little kids, so everyone was afraid to go near there. But there was a neat path that ran up the cliff behind the rec center, and came out on Halpine rd just up from that old man's house. We used to climb that cliff and stealthily try to see what was going on there. Never saw anything, but it was delicious, scary fun for 10 yr old kids!

When I was in Jr. High at Broome, I walked to school each day, come rain, snow or fair weather, because where we lived on Ardennes Ave was only 1.8 miles from the school and the rules back then were that you walked unless you lived 2 miles away. The school bus stop was at the top of Lemay above my house near that church on Rockland Dr (where, incidentally, I had my Boy Scout meetings). During those walks to Broome, my friend Timmy Palmer and I would take the trail along the little creek behind the shopping center. I recall one winter day we dared each other to walk on the ice. Of course we fell through and were soaked. I belonged to the Rifle Club at Broome, and we would shoot up at the old National Guard Armory. 1 day each week I would put my rifle over my shoulder and walk through my side of Twinbrook, through the shopping center, crossing Viers Mill Rd, then on to the school where we would store our rifles till that afternoon when we would then walk as a team up to the Armory on Old Baltimore Road

and do our shooting. After we finished, we would each head our separate ways with our rifles over our shoulders. I would usually stop in the Drug Fair to see if there were any new comic books or Ace Science-Fiction books on the newsstand. Or maybe I would just get a coke from their fountain, or at the soda counter across Viers Mill rd in the Peoples Drug Store. The point is, I did this with a rifle on my shoulder. My,. how the world has changed. Things were simpler then. Life was good. I know my parents struggled with finances, same as we all do as adults, but there was an extremely strong sense of community in Twinbrook. People were friendly. When I stop at the Twinbrook Shopping center, I see the same effusiveness and friendliness in the faces of the new residents of Twinbrook. Incredibly diverse. Vibrant. Alive.

And I think the shopping center is at the heart of all this. It is easily accessible by car, bus and foot. I repeat, easily accessible. It provides availability for prescriptions, food, hair care, etc,. It is very easy to get to. After I looked through your final master plan for Twinbrook, I was dismayed. Taking the availability of parking from the street to garages is a major mistake. You have missed the pulse of the life of Twinbrook.

Remember, I have lived through the debacle of the infamous Rockville Mall, and each of it's later incarnations, up to it's present configuration. We finally got it right. The Rockville "village" concept is really nice and is working, BUT it is a different type of area. Rockville is a busy day working place, and walking is the major mode of locomotion. People park their cars for the day (or night for the live-ins), and use their feet to go to all the new places. (I love 5 Guys!!). But who stops at CVS as they drive by? No one. It is dangerous and inconvenient. I saw a car last week parked in the drive lane with it's flashers on while the driver ran inside CVS. I bypass the shops near Regal and in the new city town square when I want a coke or pizza or whatever. It is a pain in the ____ to get into that parking lot, then get back out. I opt generally for Twinbrook or Wintergreen because it is convenient for drivers. Problem at Wintergreen is not enough parking. Twinbrook always has parking spots I can pull right into, then out again quickly. It is consumer friendly, which is why it has such a high level of frenetic activity and is so alive and viable for the businesses.

Why on earth would you even consider eradicating/altering this wonderful community shopping center to build a restrictive, hard to get into, elitist mistake? Have you ever driven into PG county and looked at some of their old shopping centers? Some are still okay, but some are ugly, disastrous half-empty eyesores. Such is NOT the case in Twinbrook. If it was a ghost shopping center, then okay, rebuild. But it looks nice, it is nice and it works. It doesn't need to be changed. Remember the old adage, "If it ain't broke, don't try and fix it".

I realize I am not a current resident of Rockville, lo these last 32 years, but Rockville gets much of my expendable income, spent on gasoline, hair-care in Twinbrook for my wife, Prescriptions at CVS, Gym at Wintergreen, Those wonderful slices of pizza or the great tuna subs at the Twinbrook deli, ice cream from Dairy Queen and groceries at Safeway. I feel that part of my soul is invested in Rockville, Twinbrook primarily, but the entire town. I work here. It is my hometown. So I feel I have the right to make these comments. I hope that they do not fall on deaf ears. Consideration of what the "people" want, is all too often lacking in city plans. The committees get wrapped up in there mission, imbued with a sense of "doing the best" for their town. But it is easy to get carried away, and that is not what should happen here. What works some places, like the new Rockville Town Center, will not work in other places, specifically Twinbrook,

which is, in the final analysis, is simply a shopping stop for traffic on Viers Mill Rd, as well as local residents. I hope you will not implement this plan.

Twinbrook should be looked upon as a historical treasure that is still living and breathing. It works and it is good. Don't change it. Please.

Thank you for your attention. I hope you find something interesting in my letter,

Sincerely, Andy Harper



Brenda Bean/RKV
09/29/2008 11:00 AM

To andyharper@comcast.net
cc mayorcouncil, twinbrookplan, Ann Wallas/RKV, Susan Swift/RKV,
bcc
Subject Fw: Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan

Dear Mr. Harper ~

On behalf of the Mayor and Council, thank you very much for your comments regarding the proposed Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan. The Mayor and Council, and the appropriate staff who have seen your comments, appreciate the feedback they receive.

Brenda F. Bean
Deputy City Clerk
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850
email: bbean@rockvillemd.gov
phone: (240) 314-8280
fax: (240) 314-8929

----- Forwarded by Brenda Bean/RKV on 09/29/2008 11:01 AM -----



"Andy Harper"
<andyharper@comcast.net>
>

09/27/2008 08:26 AM

To <twinbrookplan@rockvillemd.gov>
cc
Subject Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan

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"Talisman Associates"
<talism@verizon.net>
10/10/2008 03:43 PM

To <mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov>, <shoffmann@rockvillemd.gov>, <jbritton@rockvillemd.gov>,
cc "Naomi Belkin" <naomi_talisman@verizon.net>,
"Mahyar" <mahyar@att.net>

bcc

Subject: Zoning heights

History:  This message has been replied to.

October 10, 2008

Dear Mayor and council:

As we come to discuss zoning heights again, I would like to reiterate my objections. Anything below our current height of 75 feet greatly reduces the shopping center's potential for development. Our shopping center is very small and a greater height would be much more attractive to developers as they would have the opportunity go up to seventy percent more space. Many of the owners of the shopping center, myself included, have been invested in our property for over 20 years and it would be extremely unfair of the city to devalue the property through zoning and putting strict limits on any future redevelopment.

The shopping center is on a major highway and we pay substantial taxes because of our location. If the city should move to restrict our zoning height it would mean that the city is not interested in using our tax dollars to improve our area. The owners plan to stay for a long time to come and so, we have the best interests of our community in mind. We believe that a redevelopment can be attractive and of high quality, no matter what the height. We plan to guard our interests and want to maintain the ability to plan a shopping center that would add value to the community.

These are extremely trying financial times. We are doing our best to provide for our community. It is of concern that after the hours of meetings and recommendations by professionals, we still cannot be assured that a positive decision about our investment and our future will be respected. The zoning height is the one thing that could dramatically devalue our investment. We are not interested in redevelopment now or even in the near future. We do insist that the zoning height gives us leverage strength over future development. Unlike most shopping centers we are a condominium of small business owners and this property is our major asset.


Sincerely,
Naomi Belkin
President, Twinbrook Mart Condo Association
naomi_talisman@verizon.net



Rob Perks
<river_rob@hotmail.com>
10/10/2008 07:06 PM

To <mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov>
cc <twinbrookpres@yahoo.com>
bcc

Subject Twinbrook Blueprint

History:  This message has been replied to.

Dear Mayor & City Council:

I understand that there will be a public hearing on Monday, October 13th to discuss the future of Twinbrook neighborhood. Unfortunately, I will be unable to attend the hearing. But I wanted to share my comments.

I'm a homeowner in Twinbrook -- since 1997. My family enjoys the quality of life in our neighborhood, where my son walks to the elementary school and I commute to work in D.C. on the Metro.

While I'm excited about the prospect of redeveloping the Metro station for mixed residential/retail use, my over-riding concern is that our neighborhood thrive. That means smart development, which doesn't increase traffic, overcrowd our schools, increase crime or lower our property values. It also means improving and expanding our community services and preserving and increasing our recreational parks and open space.

In general, I'm supportive of the alternative vision for our neighborhood as put forth by the Twinbrook Citizens Association. I urge you to heed TCA's recommendations as you decide on development issues that will affect the way we live.

Twinbrook is a quaint, friendly, diverse, blue-collar neighborhood. You should do all possible to embrace and nurture our community, not sacrifice it for the sake of corporate profit or in the name of progress.

Thank you.

Rob Perks
5813 Ridgway Avenue
Rockville, MD 20851

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Edward daoud
<edaoud@verizon.net>

10/11/2008 11:21 AM

To mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov

cc twinbrookpres@yahoo.com

bcc

Subject Twinbrook public hearing 10/13/08

History:

✉ This message has been replied to.

To Honorable Susan R. Hoffmann, Mayor and Members of the Rockville
City Council

We are residents of the Twinbrook neighborhood and would like to share our concerns. We want this neighborhood to remain mostly residential with single family homes and are concerned about future traffic and traffic is already a problem in our neighborhood. We want to keep existing green space in the neighborhood and trees planted with the new developments. We prefer the Twinbrook shopping centers to remain shorter and smaller than the proposed tall office buildings. The Twinbrook library, a jewel of the neighborhood, should remain. Being an older neighborhood, we prefer that existing houses and property be allowed to be improved over time to keep the Twinbrook neighborhood mostly residential with single family homes.

Thank you
Sincerely


Marcia and Edward Daoud
13300 Ardennes Ave
Rockville, MD 20851
301-738-8428



aussiluv@comcast.net
10/12/2008 12:35 PM

To mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov
cc twinbrookpres@yahoo.com
bcc

Subject Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan

History:  This message has been replied to.

Dear Mayor & Council Members;

I have been a Twinbrook/Rockville resident since 1954. I grew up on Ardennes Ave., across from Twinbrook Elementary, which I and my children attended. When I married I bought a home in the Halpine Village area of Twinbrook and in which I still live. I feel Twinbrook residents have been the backbone of Rockville for oh so many years! As I read through sections of the proposed Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan I feel we may be treated as second rate citizens, that the mayor & council think they can bulldoze right over us. I sit here wondering IF the mayor & council would write these same proposals for the residents of West End Rockville or those off Falls Rd?

Below, I will highlight the areas of most concern to myself.

1. I am concerned that you may be adding zones that do not match with what you are doing in the rest of the city. WHY would you do this to our area and not the entire city?

2. I am concerned that you might try to look for new ways/methods to seize private property? Again WHY in our area and not the entire city AND what methods are you theorizing to employ?

3. I am concerned that you have not developed a plan for the future of the old Broome Junior High School building and area. (A school which I attended when it first opened.) Along this line you are planning high density building on land that backs up to parkland. Why not develop that entire area into beautiful green space with parklike settings--gazebos, benches, gardens etc. The little park-like area off Falls Rd., across from Julius West is beautiful! Why can't we have something like that in this area?

4. In today's economy, I feel people need access to public libraries without having to take a Ride-on bus to Rockville. People STILL enjoy reading and students need to learn to research. I see NO plans in "the plan" to keep Twinbrook Library open. (Not all people can afford or will be able to afford to purchase books on their own, so a neighborhood library is strongly needed.)

5. I am TERRIBLY concerned that you may turn our neighborhood into a government run neighborhood by imposing restrictions on our homes like a Home Owners Association would do. This is ONE of the reasons we LOVE our neighborhood as it is! We have individuality in how we want OUR homes to be--not as the government THINKS they should be.

6. I am concerned that you have NOT notified us property owners as to whether our property values will go up OR down under this PROPOSED plan!!!! This is DEFINITELY something you should have the common courtesy to do.

7. I am concerned about you feeling that Twinbrook should be a major bus depot area!! We are not that large. This is something for Rockville, proper, to consider, NOT Twinbrook.

8. Finally, one of my major concerns is the traffic. What studies have been done considering all the traffic that will be added to poor Twinbrook Parkway, Lewis Avenue, Veirs Mill Rd., Ardennes Ave., Atlantic Ave., AND Rockville Pike? I have NOT seen any type of studies being conducted near my home off Halpine Rd! What an impact with ALL the building, both commercial AND residential, will will on traffic in our beloved area! (I hope you have looked into infrastructure other than roadways, too, ie sewers, electrical & gas pipelines!)

Thank you for this opportunity! I thank you, in advance, for "listening" to my concerns and I hope to see some answers to these concerns.

Sincerely,

Patricia (Pat) L. Campbell
3 Alsace Lane
Rockville, MD 20851-2402
aussiluv@comcast.net